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PACIFIC SOUTHWEST
FOREST AND RANGE
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RESEARCH NOTE

No. 210

1962

WOOD CHARCOAL PRODUCTION IN CALIFORNIA FOR 1961

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ABSTRACT: Production of wood charcoal in California for 1961 increased 16.4 percent from that in 1956, despite a marked decrease in the number of producers. The 103 operating kilns produced at only 24 percent of their potential annual capacity. Average selling price of bulk charcoal decreased 26 percent. Most raw charcoal was processed into briquettes.

Production of the wood charcoal industry in California for 1961 increased 16.4 percent from that in 1956, despite a marked drop in the number of producers. The increase of about 760 tons of charcoal indicates a continuation of the upward trend in production which began shortly after World War II.

The data in this report were gathered as part of a nationwide survey of the wood-charcoal industry. A list of all known wood-charcoal producers was compiled in cooperation with the California Division of Forestry. Production reports were obtained from each producer. Some statistics were combined to prevent revealing data for individual plants. Data for 1961 were compared with the results of the 1956 survey.

Concentration of Producers

The greatest number of charcoal producers is still concentrated in San Luis Obispo County, as it was in 1956 (see map). Eleven of the 20 known charcoal producers in 1961 were located in this area. Their share of production, however, fell from 79.1 percent in 1956 to 17.4 percent in 1961 (table 1).

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Selling Price of Charcoal Decreases

In 1961 the average selling price for bulk charcoal dropped 26 percent from the 1956 price (table 2). The selling price of bagged charcoal decreased only 3 percent. A large metropolitan area had the highest selling price. Prices were generally lower in rural areas and in localities where charcoal producers are concentrated. Most of the raw bagged charcoal (94 percent) was sold as screened lump, which is a desirable form for home use.

Hardwood Used Exclusively in Manufacture

California charcoal producers purchased 10,114 cords of hardwood at an average price of $13.05 per cord. Only roundwood was used in wood charcoal manufacturing in 1961, although two plants were known to have manufactured charcoal from nonwood products.

Jobbers Increase Share of Outlets

Sales to jobbers[1/] increased 10 percent between 1956 and 1961 (table 3). Sales directly to briquetting plants decreased 10 percent during that period. In 1961 no sales to industrial users were reported.

Kilns Producing at Less Than Capacity

There were 103 kilns operating in California in 1961 (table 4). They produced 5,410.5 tons, or only 24 percent of their potential annual capacity[2/] of 22,651 tons. Kiln capacity ranged from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to 16 tons of charcoal per cycle.

Largest Single Users of Raw Charcoal

Most of the raw charcoal produced in California is processed into briquettes. Of the briquettes reported sold in 1961, 85 percent went to jobbers, 1 percent to chain stores, and 14 percent to other purchasers. All briquettes were sold bagged at an average selling price of $92.80 per ton.

1/ Jobbers resell charcoal to retailers or other processing agents.

2/ Potential annual capacity is defined as the quantity of charcoal that could be produced in a 310-day operating year.

Table 1.--Charcoal production by county, 1961 and 1956

County	Plants	Lumps	Fines	Unscreened	Total	Production
	Number	- - - - - -		Tons	- - - - - -	Percent
1961						
San Luis Obispo	11	149	19	770	938	17.4
Tulare	4	723	126	300	1,149	21.2
Other	5	995	317	2,011.5	3,323.5	61.4
Total	20	1,867	462	3,081.5	5,410.5	100.0
1956						
San Luis Obispo	24	3,197	483	--	3,680	79.1
Tulare	3	109	5	--	114	2.5
Others	12	652	203	--	855	18.4
Total	39	3,958	691	--	4,649	100.0

Table 2.--Volume of lump charcoal and prices per ton, in bulk and in bags, received by California producers, 1961 and 1956[1/]

Lump charcoal	1961	1956
Bulk		
Volume. . . . . .tons	2,767.5	2,275.0
Price		
Range . . . . . .dollars	34-100	45-100
Weighted. . . . . .dollars	45.76	57.55
Bags		
Volume. . . . . .tons	1,208	887
Price		
Range . . . . . .dollars	65-120	60-140
Weighted. . . . . .dollars	98.90	101.95

1/ Based on volume sold which differs from volume produced.

Table 3.--Reported outlets for wood charcoal marketed by California producers, 1961 and 1956

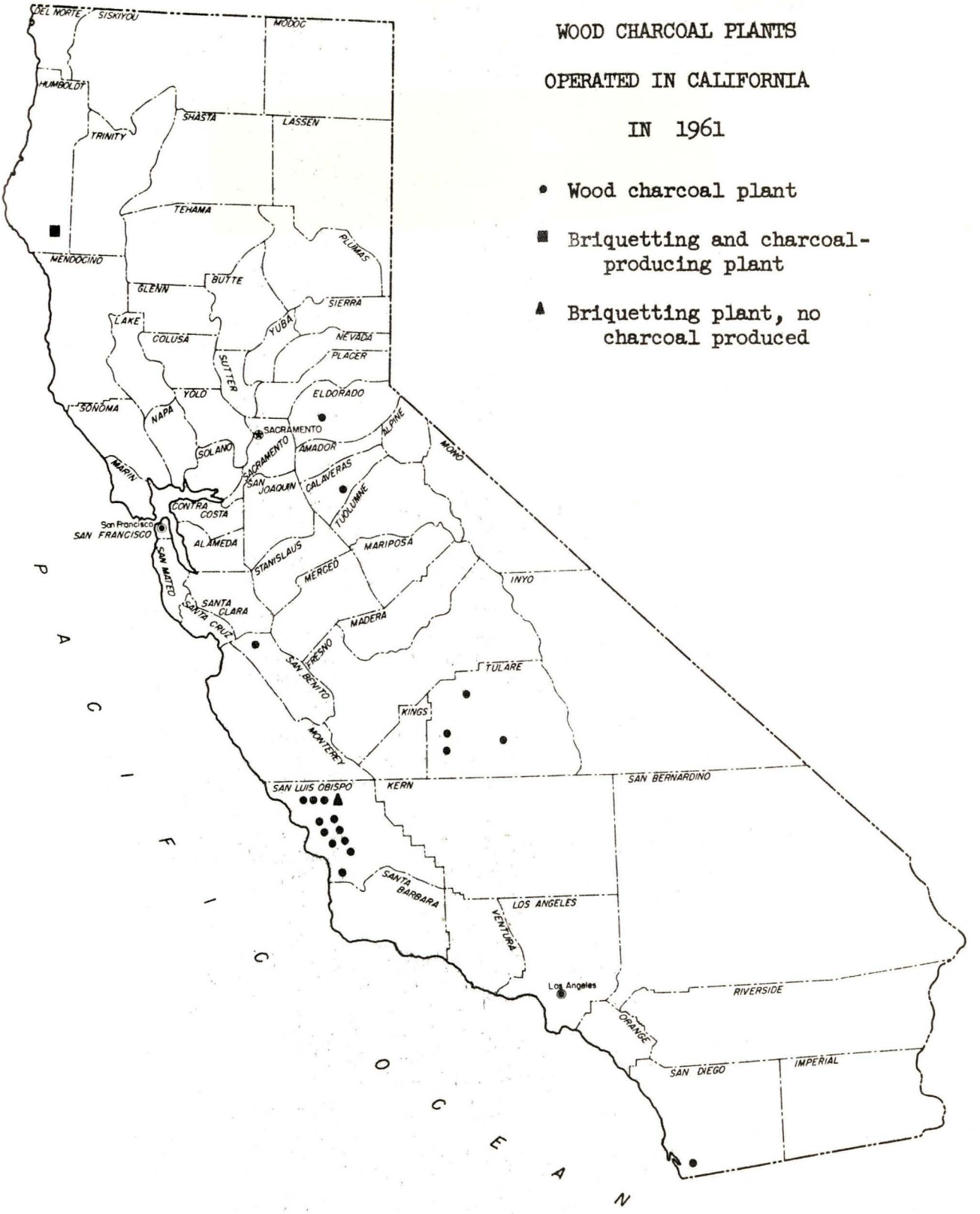
Year	Jobbers	Briquette plants	Industrial	Other[1]	Volume
	Percent				Tons
1961	74	19	0	7	3,975.5
1956	64	29	2	5	3,596

[1] Includes sales to restaurants and for home use.

Table 4.--Types of kilns by number and capacity

Type	Number	Capacity	
		Range	Weighted average
		Tons	
Brick	21	1¼-16	6.5
Concrete or masonry block	62	3-13	9.2
Steel (beehive)	11	2	2
Other[1]	9	3-15	9.2

[1] Includes dirt, rockwall, and adobe.


WOOD CHARCOAL PLANTS
OPERATED IN CALIFORNIA
IN 1961
• Wood charcoal plant
■ Briquetting and charcoal-producing plant
▲ Briquetting plant, no charcoal produced
DEL NORTE
SISKIYOU
MODOC
HUMBOLDT
TRINITY
SHASTA
LASSEN
TEHAMA
PLUMAS
MENDOCINO
BUTTE
GLENN
SIERRA
LAKE
COLUSA
YUBA
NEVADA
SUTTER
PLACER
YOLO
ELDORADO
SONOMA
NAPA
SACRAMENTO
ALPINE
SOLANO
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SACRAMENTO
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STANISLAUS
MARIPOSA
SAN MATEO
MERCED
INYO
SANTA CLARA
MADERA
SANTA CRUZ
FRESNO
TULARE
SAN BENITO
KINGS
MONTEREY
SAN LUIS OBISPO
KERN
SAN BERNARDINO
SANTA BARBARA
LOS ANGELES
VENTURA
Los Angeles
RIVERSIDE
ORANGE
SAN DIEGO
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